

VZCZCXRO2515
RR RUEHHM
DE RUEHHI #0748 1770634
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 250634Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8065
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 4886

C O N F I D E N T I A L HANOI 000748

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/24/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES HUMAN RIGHTS CASES, CONSULAR
DISTRICT ISSUE WITH SECURITY CHIEF

Classified By: CDA Jonathan Aloisi. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During a June 20 meeting with Ministry of Public Security Vice Minister Nguyen Van Huong, the Ambassador again urged the GVN to take positive action on several human rights cases. The Vice Minister's response was noncommittal. Noting apparent GVN "security concerns" about an expanded Ho Chi Minh City consular district, the Ambassador queried the Vice Minister for his views on resolving this issue. VM Huong said Southern Vietnam consists of distinctive regions with separate administrative structures, for which a single consular district would not be appropriate. He suggested that a U.S. consular presence in Danang could be a partial solution. End summary.

Bui Kim Thanh Released, but Stop the Harassment

¶2. (C) The Ambassador's meeting with Ministry of Public Security (MPS) Vice Minister Nguyen Van Huong was a chance to follow up on cases raised during the Human Rights Dialogue in May. The Ambassador noted that the recent release of land rights activist Bui Kim Thanh from a mental hospital was welcome news and that processing for her resettlement in the U.S. was proceeding. However, the Ambassador mentioned reports that Ms. Thanh was being harassed by police in Ho Chi Minh City and urged VM Huong to look into the matter. The Vice Minister dismissed such reports, saying his ministry "cannot expend its forces to monitor such persons," but said he would contact local authorities to ask them not to do anything that would "create a misunderstanding that the MPS has her under surveillance."

Prisoners' Behavior Doesn't Merit Amnesty

¶3. (C) The Ambassador urged the Vietnamese Government to reconsider releasing Le Thi Cong Nhan, as well as to release Nguyen Van Dai next month when he will be eligible for amnesty. VM Huong responded that the GVN had made a "special effort" to review Nhan's case because DRL Assistant Secretary David Kramer had raised it during the Human Rights Dialogue. However, prison officials reported that Nhan regularly violates prison regulations and that such behavior does not justify release. VM Huong suggested that both Nhan and Dai could be released as part of the next general amnesty on Vietnamese National Day (September 2), but only if they show respect for Vietnamese law and prison regulations.

¶4. (C) Concerning Pham Hong Son, a prospective NED Reagan-Fascell fellow, the Ambassador again asked VM Huong to make it possible for Son to get a passport. The Vice Minister explained that, while a condition of Son's amnesty is to report regularly to local authorities, the passport matter would be considered. VM Huong concluded by saying that "we cannot solve all cases at one time, or else public opinion would object to the appearance of U.S. interference in Vietnam's internal affairs. That would make cooperation more difficult on other issues."

15. (C) Concerning the Ho Chi Minh City consular district issue, the Ambassador said the two sides had hoped to reach agreement in time to allow the opening of a Vietnamese Consulate in Houston during PM Dung's visit. However, MFA commented that "security conditions" had prevented the Vietnamese side from recognizing the consulate's jurisdiction in all 32 southern and central provinces. VM Huong responded with a description of two sub-regions within the proposed consular district, Southwest Vietnam and the Central Highlands, whose identity in terms of terrain, ethnic composition and social and economic development differentiate them from the Ho Chi Minh City area. He said it would be "inappropriate" to define the Ho Chi Minh consular district to include those areas because such a district would not conform to Vietnamese "administrative policies." VM Huong summed up by saying the consular district could include some areas outside Ho Chi Minh City, but not the entire South. He also suggested that the Central Highlands area could be supported by a new consulate in Danang. In the interim, he recommended that visits by consulate staff beyond the boundary of the agreed upon Ho Chi Minh City district should be discussed with the MFA in Hanoi.

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